

# MEMORANDUM

*Department of Financial Services*



**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**Through:** Charles Lawson, City Manager  
**From:** Emma C. Karlen, Director of Financial Services *Em C Karlen*  
**Subject:** Revised Budget Guidelines and Fiscal Policies  
**Date:** May 1, 2006

**Background:** The current Budget Guidelines and Fiscal Policies were last approved by the City Council in FY 93-94. Over the past twelve years, various policies have evolved with regard to the budget and other fiscal matters. There are sections in the Budget Guidelines and Fiscal Policies that are no longer relevant and/or do not reflect the current practices. Staff have revised and updated the attached Budget Guidelines and Fiscal Policies for Council's review and comments. Staff's recommendation is for the City Council to approve these two documents simultaneously with the FY 06-07 budget adoption on June 6, 2006.

## **Discussion:**

The Revised Budget Guidelines is a set of specific guidelines established by the City Manager, for the preparation and administration of the budget. From these guidelines, further procedures may be developed. The Budget Guidelines identifies the roles and responsibilities of the City Council, City Manager, Finance Director and department heads in preparing and administering the annual operating budget. This document also identifies the form and content of the proposed budget and the budget authority of the City Manager. The changes in revised Budget Guidelines are as follows:

- 1) Minor language changes throughout the document to make the Budget Guidelines more precise and user-friendly.
- 2) Define the meaning of a balanced budget. A balanced budget is defined as a budget where the anticipated operating revenues and other financing resources including carryover of outstanding encumbrances from prior year are equal to or exceed operating expenditures.
- 3) Add a Five Year General Fund Revenue and Expenditure projection schedule in the proposed budget to allow the City Council and the community to assess the sustainability of City services in the long term.
- 4) Require that the annual operating budget be adopted no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> of the prior fiscal year.
- 5) Increase the City Manager's budget authority from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The City Manager may make appropriation transfers among the departments within the same fund up to \$20,000. Transfers between different funds or transfers that exceed \$20,000 must

- require City Council's prior approval. The City Manager does not have the authority to use any undesignated fund balances without prior approval from the City Council.
- 6) Re-appropriate any unspent appropriations funded by grant revenues. If a budget item is funded by grant revenues and the item has not been expensed at year-end, that budget item will be automatically re-appropriated in the next fiscal year's budget.
  - 7) Move the discussion of Reserves to the document entitled "City of Milpitas Fiscal Policies to consolidate all the Fiscal Policies discussion in one document.

The Revised City of Milpitas Fiscal Policies is a set of policy statements that were either previously adopted by the City Council or evolved overtime to reflect professional standards recommended by organizations such as Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) and the California Society of Municipal Finance Offices (CSMFO). These policy statements contribute to the fiscal soundness of a governmental agency's operation. The changes in the Revised City of Milpitas Fiscal Policies are as follows:

- 1) Minor language changes throughout the document to make the Fiscal Policies more comprehensive and user-friendly.
- 2) Bullet point No. 9 - Affirm that the City's operating budget is prepared on a basis consistent with generally accepted accounting principals.
- 3) Bullet point No. 14 - State that the City will actively pursue federal, state, and other grant opportunities provided that the implications of any ongoing obligations are considered before acceptance of any grant funds.
- 4) Bullet point No. 21 - Affirm that the utility enterprise funds will be operated in a manner similar to private enterprise. As such, these funds will seek full recovery of total direct and indirect costs, including depreciation of assets, overhead, charges, and reserves for unanticipated expenses and capital projects.
- 5) Bullet point No. 24 - State that the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) will seek other funding sources such as State and Federal funds, private funds and leverage these funding sources with public money to help meet the highest priority community needs.
- 6) Bullet point No. 25 - Clarify that when funding for future projects identified in the Five Year CIP has not been secured or legally authorized, these future projects may be subject to change.
- 7) Bullet point No. 26 - Define the responsibilities of a Project Manager when assigned to each capital project. These responsibilities include monitoring all phases of the project to ensure timely completion of the project and compliance with the project budget and all regulations and laws.
- 8) Bullet point No. 29 - Affirm that the City will protect and enhance the City's general credit rating.
- 9) Bullet point No. 33 - Maintain unreserved, undesignated fund balance of at least 15% of the annual operating expenditures in the General Fund. The City Council has approved this practice but it was not formally changed in the Reserve Policies.

- 10) Bullet point No. 34 – Maintain a Public Employees Retirement Rate Stabilization Reserve in the amount of \$5 million. The City Council approved the establishment of this Reserve in FY 2000-01. The revised policy statement defines the circumstances under which this reserve may be utilized and how it will be replenished. As in all cases, any use of reserves must be pre-approved by the City Council.
- 11) Bullet point No. 35 – Establish a Storm Drain replacement reserve beginning in FY 2009-10. The Storm Drain infrastructure in the City is 50 years old. There are no other funding sources such as customer charges to pay for future replacement costs. Staff recommends that the City set-aside \$1 million annually in the General Fund reserve for such purpose.
- 12) Bullet point No. 36 – Pre-fund retiree medical benefits by establishing an irrevocable trust account. Staff previously reported the results of the unfunded liability on the retiree medical benefits based on an actuarial study. The revised policy statement formalizes the establishment of a trust account to pre-fund the liability, as approved by the City Council.
- 13) Bullet point No. 38 – Amend the water and sewer utility enterprise funds operating reserve requirements to 30% of the operating expenses for Water fund and 25% of the operating expenses for Sewer fund respectively. As the Water and Sewer expenses grow overtime, current policy to reserve \$1 million in each fund is no longer adequate.
- 14) Bullet point No. 39 – Add the requirement of an infrastructure replacement fund for both Water and Sewer utilities. As the infrastructure reaches the end of its useful life, it is important that funding is available for replacement. The goal is to accumulate at least \$2 million a year from each utility fund. This is consistent with the recommendation of the Utility Financial Master Plan.
- 15) Bullet point No. 40 – Establish a Recycled Water Fund infrastructure replacement reserve of at least \$300,000.
- 16) Bullet point No. 42 – Maintain at least 30% of the Gas Tax revenues for street repair emergencies and other unanticipated traffic safety projects. Annual Gas tax revenue is approximately \$1.2 million.
- 17) Bullet point No. 43 - Add a requirement to maintain at least 30% of the replacement costs for all the equipment accounted for in Equipment Replacement fund.
- 18) Bullet point No. 44 – Establish an initial capital reserve of \$700,000 in a replacement fund for technological needs. As some of the computer equipment and technologies became outdated, it is important that funding is available for replacement. Upon the full repayment of the Technology Certificates of Participation debt in FY 09-10, the amount that is currently budgeted for debt service will free up. This replacement account can be replenished in an annual amount of \$250,000.
- 19) Bullet point No. 45 – Maintain at least 15% of the Redevelopment annual revenue in the unreserved, undesignated fund balance. This fund balance can be used for unforeseen capital needs and economic development opportunities.

**Recommendation:** Approve the revised Budget Guidelines and Fiscal Policies.

## **BUDGET GUIDELINES**

The annual operating budget is the primary short-term financial plan for the City. The operating budget shall serve as the policy document of the City Council for implementing Council goals and objectives. It is used to set forth the City's estimates of resources available to fund services that are consistent with the Council's goals. Since no plan will prove to be an absolutely accurate reflection of future events, management must have sufficient flexibility to make adjustments during the year, provided these adjustments do not materially alter the general intent of the City Council when adopting the budget. These guidelines are intended to provide that flexibility and to establish adequate controls, through budget monitoring and periodic reporting, to ensure that the overall distribution of resources achieves the results contemplated by the City Council.

Annually, the City Council establishes priorities regarding service levels to provide guidance to management in preparing the recommended budget. Through its legislative authority, the Council approves and adopts the budget by resolution.

The City Manager is responsible for proposing to the City Council a balanced budget which is consistent with the Council's service level priorities and sound business practices. Balanced budget is defined as a budget where the anticipated operating revenues and other financing resources including carryover of outstanding encumbrances from prior year are equal to or exceed operating expenditures. The City Manager is also responsible for establishing a system for the preparation, execution, and control of the budget which provides reasonable assurances that the intent of Council policies are met.

The Director of Financial Services is responsible for providing periodic budget status reports to the City Manager and the City Council and monthly budget reports to the Department Heads to facilitate control and compliance with the budget.

The Department Heads are responsible for monitoring their respective budgets for compliance with the intent of Council priorities and for insuring that appropriations of the aggregate total of the department are not exceeded.

## **SUMMARY OF BUDGET GUIDELINES**

### **1. General**

These guidelines are intended to require that procedures be used in the development, review, adoption, and monitoring of the budget, and to set forth the nature of those procedures. The detailed procedures used are to be established by the City Manager.

2. **Budget Calendar**

A budget preparation calendar will be provided to the Department Heads and to the City Council at the beginning of the budget process each year. The calendar will set forth, at a minimum, dates for the following:

- a. Review of service level priorities by the City Council at an annual City Council and City Management Planning Workshop.
- b. Presentation of the City Manager's proposed budget to the City Council, which shall be no later than the second week in June.

3. **Form and Content of the City Manager's Proposed Budget**

- a. The City Manager's proposed budget, the Preliminary Budget and Financial Plan, shall be presented in a form which is sufficient to allow the City Council to determine and review:
  - Provision of City Council priorities as established at the annual City Council Planning Workshop;
  - Projected revenues by major category;
  - Operating expenditures by department or program, and by fund;
  - Historical Staffing by Division;
  - Service levels;
  - Statements of objectives and accomplishments;
  - Recommendations for policy changes and impact;
  - Capital improvement appropriations by project.
- b. Comparison with the preceding year's actual results and current year's projected results will be provided for each category of revenue and expenditure shown in the budget.
- c. A description of the service levels to be provided under the proposed budget will be included.
- d. A statement of the services reduced or eliminated and the services improved or added, as compared to the current year, will be included.
- e. A schedule showing General Fund Revenue and Expenditure projection for the next five years.

4. **Adoption of the Budget**

The City Council will adopt the budget by resolution no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> of the previous fiscal year, setting forth the amount of appropriations and authority of the City Manager to administer the adopted budget.

5. **Budget Authority of the City Manager**

The City Manager shall have the authority to amend appropriations within the various departments and projects within a fund, provided that the amount of the amended appropriation is \$20,000 or less. Interfund transfers or transfers of an appropriation amount within a fund which in any single instance exceed \$20,000 require prior approval of the City Council. No expenditures may be made from any undesignated fund balances without an appropriation by the City Council.

The City Manager shall have the authority to reasonably deviate from the budgeted personnel allocation schedule provided that at no time will the number of permanent, full-time employees authorized by the City Council be exceeded.

6. **Budget Amendments by the City Council**

The City Council may from time to time approve expenditures and identify funding sources not provided for in the adopted budget including those expenditures funded through undesignated fund balances.

7. **Budget Transfers and Modification Procedures**

Procedures to implement budget transfers or budget modifications are detailed in Standard Procedure No. 21-1, subject to any changes by the Budget Resolution.

8. **Automatic Adjustments and Reappropriations**

- a. Outstanding encumbrances at prior fiscal year-end will automatically be carried over to current year's budgets.
- b. Unspent appropriations that are authorized and funded by grant revenues from prior fiscal year will automatically be carried over to current year's budgets.
- c. Incomplete multiple year project balances will automatically be reappropriated.

9. **Budget Monitoring and Reporting**

- a. General Monthly Reports - The Director of Financial Services will prepare a monthly budget report including actual expenditures and encumbrances for distribution to the City Manager and Department

Heads, to facilitate monitoring of the budget.

- b. Periodic Budget Reports - The Director of Financial Services will periodically prepare a budget status report for presentation to the City Council. At the minimum, the report shall include the status of the General Fund revenues and expenditures, Water and Sewer utility fund revenues, and Redevelopment Project fund revenues.

10. **Reserves**

Various unallocated reserves are desired in each of the City's funds to protect the City in emergencies, economic uncertainties, and to finance unforeseen opportunities and/or requirements. Reserve policies for various funds are described in detail in the document entitled "City of Milpitas Fiscal Policies".

## **CITY OF MILPITAS FISCAL POLICIES**

### **GENERAL FINANCIAL GOALS**

1. To maintain a financially viable city that can maintain an adequate level of municipal services.
2. To maintain financial flexibility in order to be able to continually adapt to local and regional economic change.
3. To maintain and enhance the sound fiscal condition of the City.

### **OPERATING BUDGET POLICIES**

4. The City will adopt a balanced budget by June 30th of each year.
5. An annual base operating budget will be developed by accurately and realistically projecting revenues and expenditures for the current and forthcoming fiscal year.
6. During the annual budget development process, the existing base budget will be thoroughly examined to assure cost effectiveness of the services or programs provided.
7. Annual operating budgets will include the cost of operations of new capital projects.
8. The City will avoid balancing the current budget at the expense of future budgets, unless the use of reserves is expressly authorized by the City Council.
9. The City's operating budget will be prepared on a basis consistent with generally accepted accounting principals (GAAP) except that encumbrances are considered budgetary expenditures in the year of the commitment to purchase and capital project expenditures are budgeted on a project length basis.

### **REVENUE POLICIES**

10. The City will try to maintain a diversified and stable revenue system to avoid over-reliance on any one revenue source.
11. Revenue estimates are to be accurate and realistic, sensitive to both local and regional economic conditions.
12. The City will estimate its annual revenues by an objective, analytical process utilizing trend, judgmental, and statistical analysis as appropriate.



13. User fees will be reviewed annually for potential adjustments to recover the full cost of services provided, except when the City Council determines that a subsidy is in the public interest.
14. The City will actively pursue federal, state, and other grant opportunities when deemed appropriate. Before accepting any grant, the City will thoroughly consider the implications in terms of ongoing obligations that will be required in connection with acceptance of said grant.
15. One-time revenues will be used for one-time expenditures only, including capital outlay and reserves.

#### **EXPENDITURE POLICIES**

16. The City will maintain levels of service, as determined by the City Council, to provide for the public well-being and safety of the residents of the community.
17. Employee benefits and salaries will be maintained at competitive levels.
18. Fixed assets will be maintained and replaced as necessary, minimizing deferred maintenance.
19. The City will develop and use technology and productivity enhancements that are cost effective in reducing or avoiding increased personnel costs.

#### **UTILITY RATES AND FEES**

20. Water and sewer utility customer rates and fees will be reviewed and adjusted annually, if necessary.
21. All utility enterprise funds will be operated in a manner similar to private enterprise. As such, the City will set fees and user charges for each utility fund at a level that fully supports the total direct and indirect cost of the activity, including depreciation of assets, overhead charges, and reserves for unanticipated expenses and capital projects.

#### **CAPITAL BUDGET POLICIES**

22. The City will develop an annual Five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which is designed to develop and maintain infrastructure to support existing residences and businesses and future anticipated development.

23. The CIP will identify the estimated full cost of each project which includes administration, design, development and implementation, and operating costs once the projects are completed.
24. The CIP will identify potential funding sources for each proposed capital project, prior to submitting proposed projects to the City Council for approval. When appropriate, the CIP will seek other funding sources such as State and Federal funds, private funds and leverage these funding sources with public money to help meet the highest priority community needs.
25. The funding for the first year of the Five-year CIP will be legally appropriated as a component of the annual operating budget. Funding for future projects identified in the five year has not been secured or legally authorized and is therefore subject to change.
26. Each CIP project will be assigned to a Project Manager whose responsibilities are to monitor all phases of the project to ensure timely completion of the project and compliance with the project budget and all regulations and laws.

#### **DEBT POLICIES**

27. The City will limit long-term debt to only those capital improvements or long-term liabilities that cannot be financed from current revenue sources.
28. The City will utilize debt financing for projects which have a useful life that can reasonably be expected to exceed the period of debt service for the project.
29. The City will protect and enhance the City's general credit rating.
30. The City may utilize interfund loans rather than outside debt to meet short-term cash flow needs.
31. The City will minimize costs and liabilities to the City when sponsoring debt financing for private sectors.

#### **RESERVE POLICIES**

32. The City will periodically review and update reserve guidelines, to ensure that the City has sufficient reserve balances to adequately provide for emergencies, economic uncertainties, unforeseen operating or capital needs, economic development opportunities, and cash flow requirements.
33. The City will maintain unreserved, undesignated fund balance of at least 15% of the annual operating expenditures in the General Fund for emergencies and unforeseen

operating or capital needs.

34. The City will maintain in the General Fund a \$5 million Public Employees Retirement Rate Stabilization Reserve. This reserve may be drawn on if the required employer contribution rates exceed previous year contribution rates by more than 3%. The City Council must approve utilization of this reserve at the time of the budget hearing. This reserve will be replenished from the unreserved, undesignated fund balance after the 15% requirement of the operating expenditures has been met.
35. The City will maintain a Storm Drain replacement reserve to replace and repair storm drain pump stations. Beginning in FY 2009-2010, the City will set-aside \$1 million annually from the General Fund reserve for this purpose.
36. The City will maintain a retiree medical benefits account established by an irrevocable trust. It is anticipated that the City will begin funding the normal cost of the retiree medical benefits annually in the operating budget.
37. Other reserves designated in the General Fund for investment portfolio market gain, and sick leave payable will be calculated and adjusted annually at appropriate levels.
38. The City will maintain working capital in the Water and Sewer utility enterprise funds to provide for future capital projects and unanticipated emergencies, such as water main break repairs and pump station repairs. The City will attempt to maintain a working capital reserve of approximately 30% of the annual operating and maintenance expenses for Water utility fund and 25% of the annual operating and maintenance expenses for Sewer utility fund.
39. In addition, the City will maintain Infrastructure Replacement funds for both Water and Sewer utilities. The goal is to accumulate at least \$2 million a year from each utility fund to set-aside for replacement of infrastructure as the infrastructure reaches the end of its useful life.
40. The City will maintain at least \$300,000 in the Recycled Water utility fund for the purpose of infrastructure replacement and enhancement.
41. Reserve levels for Debt Service Funds will be established and maintained as prescribed by the bond covenants authorized at the time of debt issuance.
42. A minimum 30% of the estimated annual Gas Tax revenues will be set-aside as a reserve in the Street Fund to provide for street repair emergencies and other unanticipated traffic safety projects.
43. The City will maintain a capital reserve in an Equipment Replacement fund, set up as an internal service fund, to enable the timely replacement of vehicles and depreciable equipment at cost. The City will maintain a minimum fund balance of at

least 30% of the replacement costs for equipment accounted for in this fund.

44. In addition, the City will maintain an initial capital reserve of \$700,000 in an Equipment Replacement fund for technological equipment replacement. Upon the full payment of the Technology Certificates of Participation debt service in FY 09-10, an annual amount of \$250,000 will be set-aside in this fund for technological needs.
45. The City will maintain unreserved, undesignated fund balance of at least 15% of the annual operating revenues in the Redevelopment Project Fund for unforeseen capital needs and economic development opportunities such as land assemblage and developer assistance.

### **INVESTMENT POLICIES**

46. The Finance Director/City Treasurer will annually render an investment policy for City Council's review and modification as appropriate. The review will take place at a public meeting and the policy shall be adopted by resolution of the City Council.
47. City funds and investment portfolio will be managed in a prudent and diligent manner with emphasis on safety, liquidity, and yield, in that order.
48. Reports on the City's investment portfolio and cash position shall be developed by the Finance Director/City Treasurer and reviewed by the City Council quarterly.
49. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles required that differences between the costs of the investment portfolio and the fair value of the securities be recognized as income or losses in a government's annual financial report. These variances shall not be considered as budgetary resources or uses of resources unless the securities are sold before maturity or the values of the investments are permanently impaired.

### **ACCOUNTING, AUDITING, AND FINANCIAL REPORTING POLICIES**

50. The City's accounting and financial reporting systems will be maintained in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles as they apply to governmental accounting.
51. An annual audit will be performed by an independent public accounting firm with the subsequent issuance of a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, within six months of the close of the previous fiscal year.
52. Periodic financial reports and status reports will be submitted to the City Council at the end of each quarter and be made available to the public. The report will provide an analysis of budgeted versus actual revenues and expenditures, on a year-to-date basis.